

## Easter

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The English term, according to the [Ven. Bede](#) (*De temporum ratione*, I, v), relates to *Estre*, a Teutonic goddess of the rising light of day and spring, which deity, however, is otherwise unknown, even in the *Edda* ([Simrock](#), *Mythol.*, 362); Anglo-Saxon, *eâster*, *eâstron*; Old High German, *ôstra*, *ôstrara*, *ôstrarûn*; German, *Ostern*. April was called *easter-monadh*. The plural *eâstron* is used, because the feast lasts seven days. Like the French plural *Pâques*, it is a translation from the Latin *Festa Paschalia*, the entire octave of Easter. The Greek term for Easter, *pascha*, has nothing in common with the verb *paschein*, "to suffer," although by the later symbolic writers it was connected with it; it is the Aramaic form of the [Hebrew](#) *pesach* (*transitus*, [passover](#)). The Greeks called Easter the *pascha anastasimon*; [Good Friday](#) the *pascha staurosimon*. The respective terms used by the Latins are *Pascha resurrectionis* and *Pascha crucifixionis*. In the Roman and Monastic Breviaries the feast bears the title *Dominica Resurrectionis*; in the [Mozarabic Breviary](#), *In Lætatione Diei Pasch Resurrectionis*; in the [Ambrosian Breviary](#), *In Die Sancto Paschæ*. The Romance languages have adopted the Hebrew-Greek term: Latin, *Pascha*; Italian, *Pasqua*; Spanish, *Pascua*; French, *Pâques*. Also some Celtic and Teutonic nations use it: Scottish, *Pask*; [Dutch](#), *Paschen*; [The correct word in Dutch is actually Pasen](#) [Danish](#), *Paaske*; [Swedish](#), *Pask*; even in the German provinces of the Lower Rhine the people call the feast *Paisken* not *Ostern*. The word is, principally in [Spain](#) and [Italy](#), identified with the word "solemnity" and extended to other feasts, e.g. Sp., *Pascua florida*, [Palm Sunday](#); *Pascua de Pentecostes*, Pentecost; *Pascua de la Natividad*, [Christmas](#); *Pascua de Epifania*, Epiphany. In some parts of [France](#) also First Communion is called *Pâques*, whatever time of the year administered.

## The feast

Easter is the principal feast of the [ecclesiastical](#) year. [Leo I](#) (*Sermo xlvii* in *Exodum*) calls it the greatest feast (*festum festorum*), and says that [Christmas](#) is celebrated only in preparation for Easter. It is the centre of the greater part of the [ecclesiastical](#) year. The order of [Sundays](#) from [Septuagesima](#) to the last Sunday after Pentecost, the [feast of the Ascension](#), Pentecost, [Corpus Christi](#), and all other movable feasts, from that of the [Prayer of Jesus](#) in the Garden (Tuesday after [Septuagesima](#)) to the feast of the Sacred Heart (Friday after the octave of [Corpus Christi](#)), depend upon the Easter date. Commemorating the slaying of the [true](#) Lamb of God and the [Resurrection of Christ](#), the [corner-stone](#) upon which [faith](#) is built, it is also the oldest feast of the [Christian Church](#), as old as [Christianity](#), the connecting link between the [Old](#) and [New Testaments](#). That the [Apostolic Fathers](#) do not mention it and that we first hear of it principally through the [controversy of the Quartodecimans](#) are purely accidental. The connection between the Jewish [Passover](#) and the Christian feast of Easter is real and ideal. Real, since Christ died on the first Jewish Easter Day; ideal, like the relation between type and reality, because [Christ's death](#) and [Resurrection](#) had its figures and types in the [Old Law](#), particularly in the [paschal lamb](#), which was eaten towards evening of the 14th of Nisan. In fact, the Jewish feast was taken over into the Christian Easter celebration; the liturgy (*Exsultet*) sings of

the passing of [Israel](#) through the [Red Sea](#), the [paschal lamb](#), the column of fire, etc. Apart, however, from the Jewish feast, the [Christians](#) would have celebrated the anniversary of the death and the [Resurrection](#) of [Christ](#). But for such a feast it was [necessary to know](#) the exact calendar date of [Christ's death](#). To [know](#) this day was very simple for the [Jews](#); it was the day after the 14th of the first month, the 15th of Nisan of their calendar. But in other countries of the vast Roman Empire there were other systems of [chronology](#). The Romans from 45 B.C. had used the reformed Julian calendar; there were also the [Egyptian](#) and the Syro-Macedonian calendar. The foundation of the Jewish calendar was the lunar year of 354 days, whilst the other systems depended on the solar year. In consequence the first days of the Jewish months and years did not coincide with any fixed days of the Roman solar year. Every fourth year of the Jewish system had an intercalary month. Since this month was inserted, not according to some scientific method or some definite rule, but arbitrarily, by command of the [Sanhedrin](#), a distant Jewish date can never with [certainty](#) be transposed into the corresponding Julian or Gregorian date (Ideler, *Chronologie*, I, 570 sq.). The connection between the Jewish and the Christian Pasch explains the movable character of this feast. Easter has no fixed date, like [Christmas](#), because the 15th of Nisan of the [Semitic](#) calendar was shifting from date to date on the Julian calendar. Since Christ, the [true Paschal Lamb](#), had been slain on the very day when the [Jews](#), in celebration of their [Passover](#), immolated the figurative lamb, the Jewish [Christians](#) in the Orient followed the Jewish method, and commemorated the death of Christ on the 15th of Nisan and His [Resurrection](#) on the 17th of Nisan, no matter on what day of the week they fell. For this observance they claimed the authority of St. John and St. Philip.

In the rest of the empire another consideration predominated. Every Sunday of the year was a commemoration of the [Resurrection of Christ](#), which had occurred on a Sunday. Because the Sunday after 14 Nisan was the historical day of the [Resurrection](#), at [Rome](#) this Sunday became the Christian feast of Easter. Easter was celebrated in [Rome](#) and Alexandria on the first [Sunday](#) after the first full moon after the spring equinox, and the [Roman Church](#) claimed for this observance the authority of Sts. Peter and Paul. The spring equinox in [Rome](#) fell on 25 March; in Alexandria on 21 March. At Antioch Easter was kept on the Sunday after the Jewish [Passover](#). (See [EASTER CONTROVERSY](#).) In Gaul a number of [bishops](#), wishing to escape the difficulties of the paschal computation, seem to have assigned Easter to a fixed date of the Roman calendar, celebrating the death of Christ on 25 March, His [Resurrection](#) on 27 March (Marinus Dumienensis in P.L., LXXII, 47-51), since already in the third century 25 March was considered the day of the Crucifixion (Computus Pseudocyprianus, ed. Lersch, *Chronologie*, II, 61). This practice was of short duration. Many [calendars](#) in the [Middle Ages](#) contain these same dates (25 March, 27 March) for purely historical, not [liturgical](#), reasons (Grotenfend, *Zeitrechnung*, II, 46, 60, 72, 106, 110, etc.). The [Montanists](#) in [Asia Minor](#) kept Easter on the Sunday after 6 April (Schmid, *Osterfestberechnung in der abendlandischen Kirche*). The First [Council of Nicaea](#) (325) decreed that the Roman practice should be observed throughout the [Church](#). But even at [Rome](#) the Easter term was changed repeatedly. Those who continued to keep Easter with the [Jews](#) were called Quartodecimans (14 Nisan) and were excluded from the [Church](#). The *computus paschalis*, the method of determining the [date](#) of Easter and the dependent feasts, was of old considered so important that Durandus (Rit. div. off., 8, c.i.) declares a [priest](#) unworthy of the name who does not [know](#) the *computus paschalis*. The movable character of Easter (22 March to 25 April) gives rise to inconveniences, especially in modern times. For decades scientists and other people have worked in vain for a simplification of the computus, assigning Easter to the first [Sunday](#) in April or to the Sunday nearest the 7th of April. Some even wish to put every [Sunday](#) to a certain date of the month, e.g. beginning with New Year's always on a Sunday, etc. [See L. Günther, "Zeitschrift Weltall" (1903); Sandhage and P. Dueren in "Pastor bonus" (Trier, 1906); C. Tondini, "L'Italia e la questione del Calendario" (Florence, 1905).]

## **The Easter office and mass**

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The first [Vespers](#) of Easter are connected now with the Mass of [Holy Saturday](#), because that Mass was formerly celebrated in the evening (see [HOLY SATURDAY](#)); they consist of only one psalm (cxvi) and the Magnificat. The [Matins](#) have only one [Nocturn](#); the Office is short, because the [clergy](#) were busy with [catechumens](#), the reconciliation of sinners, and the distribution of [alms](#), which were given plentifully by the rich on Easter Day. This peculiarity of reciting only one [Nocturn](#) was extended by some churches from the octave of Easter to the entire [paschal time](#), and soon to all the feasts of the Apostles and similar high feasts of the entire [ecclesiastical](#) year. This observance is found in the German Breviaries far up into the nineteenth century ("Brev. Monaster.", 1830; Baumer, "Brevier", 312). The octave of Easter ceases with None of Saturday and

on Sunday the three [Nocturns](#) with the eighteen psalms of the ordinary Sunday Office are recited. Many churches, however, during the [Middle Ages](#) and later (Brev. Monaster., 1830), on [Low Sunday](#) (*Dominica in Albis*) repeated the short [Nocturn](#) of Easter Week. Before the *usus Romanae Curiae* (Baumer, 301). was spread by the [Franciscans](#) over the entire Church the eighteen (or twenty-four) psalms of the regular Sunday [Matins](#) were, three by three, distributed over the [Matins](#) of Easter Week (Bäumer, 301). This observance is still one of the peculiarities of the [Carmelite Breviary](#). The simplified [Breviary](#) of the [Roman Curia](#) (twelfth century) established the custom of repeating Psalms i, ii, iii, every day of the octave. From the ninth to the thirteenth century in most [dioceses](#), during the entire Easter Week the two [precepts](#) of hearing [Mass](#) and of abstaining from servile work were observed (Kellner, Heortologie, 17); later on this [law](#) was limited to two days (Monday and Tuesday), and since the end of the eighteenth century, to Monday only. In the [United States](#) even Monday is no holiday of [obligation](#). The first three days of Easter Week are doubles of the first class, the other days semi-doubles. During this week, in the Roman Office, through immemorial custom the [hymns](#) are omitted, or rather were never inserted. The ancient [ecclesiastical](#) Office contained no [hymns](#), and out of respect for the great solemnity of Easter and the ancient jubilus "Haec Dies", the [Roman Church](#) did not touch the old Easter Office by introducing [hymns](#). Therefore to the present day the Office of Easter consists only of psalms, [antiphons](#), and the great lessons of [Matins](#). Only the "Victimae Paschali" was adopted in most of the churches and [religious](#) orders in the Second [Vespers](#). The Mozarabic and Ambrosian Offices use the Ambrosian [hymn](#) "Hic est dies versus Dei" in [Lauds](#) and [Vespers](#), the Monastic [Breviary](#), "Ad coenam Agni providi" at [Vespers](#), "Chorus novae [Jerusalem](#)" at [Matins](#), and "Aurora lucis rutilat" at [Lauds](#). The Monastic [Breviary](#) has also three [Nocturns](#) on Easter Day. Besides the [hymns](#) the chapter is omitted and the Little Hours have no [antiphons](#); the place of the [hymns](#), chapters, and little responses is taken by the jubilus, "Haec Dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus et laetemur in ea". The Masses of Easter Week have a sequence of dramatic character, "Victimae paschali", which was composed by Wipo, a [Burgundian priest](#) at the courts of Conrad II and Henry III. The present Preface is abridged from the longer Preface of the Gregorian Sacramentary. The "Communicantes" and "Hanc igitur" contain references to the solemn [baptism](#) of Easter eve. To the "Benedicamus Domino" of [Lauds](#) and [Vespers](#) and to the "Ite Missa est" of the Mass two [alleluias](#) are added during the entire octave. Every day of the octave has a special Mass; an old [manuscript Spanish missal](#) of 855 contains three Masses for Easter Sunday; the Gallican [missals](#) have two Masses for every day of the week, one of which was celebrated at four in the morning, preceded by a procession ([Migne](#), La Liturgie Catholique, Paris, 1863, p. 952). In the Gelasian Sacramentary every day of Easter Week has its own Preface (Probst, Sacramentarien, p. 226).

To have a correct [idea](#) of the Easter celebration and its Masses, we must remember that it was intimately connected with the solemn rite of [baptism](#). The preparatory [liturgical](#) acts commenced on the eve and were continued during the night. When the number of [persons](#) to be [baptized](#) was great, the sacramental ceremonies and the Easter celebration were united. This connection was severed at a time when, the discipline having changed, even the recollection of the old traditions was lost. The greater part of the ceremonies was transferred to the morning hours of [Holy Saturday](#). This change, however, did not produce a new [liturgical](#) creation adapted to the new order of things. The old [baptismal](#) ceremonies were left untouched and have now, apparently, no other reason for preservation than their antiquity. The gap left in the [liturgical](#) services after the solemnities of the night had been transferred to the morning of [Holy Saturday](#) was filled in [France](#), [Germany](#), and in some other countries by a twofold new [ceremony](#), which, however, was never adopted in [Rome](#).

*First*, there was the commemoration of the [Resurrection of Christ](#). At midnight, before [Matins](#), the [clergy](#) in silence entered the dark church and removed the cross from the sepulchre to the [high altar](#). Then the candles were lit, the doors opened, and a solemn procession was held with the cross through the church, the [cloister](#), or cemetery. Whilst the procession moved from the altar to the door, the beautiful old antiphon, "Cum Rex gloriae", was sung, the first part softly (*humili ac depressâ voce*), to symbolize the sadness of the [souls](#) in limbo; from *Advenisti desiderabilis* the singers raised their voices in jubilation whilst the [acolytes](#) rang small bells which they carried. The full text of this antiphon, which has disappeared from the liturgy, follows:

Cum rex gloriae Christus infernum debellaturus intraret, et chorus angelicus ante faciem ejus protas principum tolli praeciperet, sanctorum populus, qui tenebatur in morte captivus, voce lacrimabili clamabat dicens: Advenisti desiderabilis, quem expectabamus in tenebris, ut educered hac nocte vinculos de claustris. Te nostra vocabant suspiria, te large requirebant lamenta, tu factus est spes desperatis, magna consolatio in tormentis. Alleluja.

When the procession returned, in many churches the "Attollite portas" (Ps. xxiii) was sung at the door, in order to symbolize the victorious entry of Christ into limbo and hell. After the procession **Matins** were sung. In later centuries the **Blessed Sacrament** took the place of the cross in the procession. This ceremony is, with the approval of the **Holy See**, still held in **Germany** on the eve of Easter with simpler ceremonies, in the form of a popular devotion.

*Second*, the visitation of the Sepulchre. After the third lesson of the **Nocturn** two clerics, representing the **holy women**, went to the empty sepulchre where another cleric (**angel**) announced to them that the **Saviour** was risen. The two then brought the message to the choir, whereupon two **priests**, impersonating Peter and John, ran to the **tomb** and, finding it empty, shoed to the people the linen in which the body had been wrapped. Then the choir sang the "Te Deum" and the "Victimae paschali". In some churches, e.g. at **Rouen**, the apparition of Christ to **Mary Magdalen** was also represented. Out of this solemn ceremony, which dates back to the tenth century, grew the numerous Easter plays. (Nord-Amerikanisches Pastoralblatt, Oct., 1907, p. 149, has a long article on these two ceremonies.) The Easter plays in the beginning used only the words of the Gospels and the "Victimae paschali"; in the course of development they became regular dramas, in Latin or vernacular verses, which contained the negotiation between the vendor of unguents and the three **women**, the dialogue between **Pilate** and the **Jews** asking for soldiers to guard the Sepulchre, the contest of Peter and John running to the **tomb**, the risen Saviour appearing to **Magdalen**, and the descent of Christ into **hell**. Towards the end of the **Middle Ages** the tone of these plays became worldly, and they were filled with long burlesque speeches of salve-dealers, **Jews**, soldiers, and demons (Creizenach, *Gesch. des neuen Dramas*, Halle, 1893).

The procession combined with the solemn **Second Vespers** of Easter Sunday is very old. There was great variety in the manner of solemnizing these **Vespers**. The service commenced with the nine Kyrie Eleisons, sung as in the Easter Mass, even sometimes with the corresponding trope *lux et origo boni*. After the third psalm the whole choir went in procession to the **baptismal chapel**, where the fourth psalm, the "Victimae paschali", and the Magnificat were sung: thence the procession moved to the great cross at the entrance to the sanctuary (choir), and from there, after the fifth psalm and the Magnificat were sung, to the empty sepulchre, where the services were concluded. The **Carmelites** and a number of **French dioceses**, e.g. **Paris**, **Lyons**, **Besançon**, **Chartres**, **Laval**, have, with the permission of the **Holy See**, retained these solemn Easter **Vespers** since the re-introduction of the **Roman Breviary**. But they are celebrated differently in every **diocese**, very much modernized in some churches. At Lyons the Magnificat is sung three times. In Cologne and **Trier** the solemn **Vespers** of Easter were abolished in the nineteenth century (Nord-Amerikanisches Pastoralblatt, April, 1908, p. 50). Whilst the **Latin Rite** admits only commemorations in **Lauds**, Mass, and **Vespers** from Wednesday in Easter Week and excludes any commemoration on the first three days of the week, the Greek and Russian Churches transfer the occurring Offices (canons) of the **saints** from **Matins** to **Complin** during the entire octave, even on Easter Sunday. After the Anti-pascha (**Low Sunday**), the canons and other canticles of Easter are continued in the entire Office up to **Ascension Day**, and the canons of the **saints** take only the second place in **Matins**. Also the Greeks and Russians have a solemn procession at midnight, before **Matins**, during which they sing at the door of the church **Psalm 67**, repeating after each verse the Easter antiphon. When the procession leaves, the church is dark; when it returns, hundreds of candles and coloured lamps are lit to represent the splendour of **Christ's Resurrection**. After **Lauds** all those who are present give each other the Easter **kiss**, not excluding even the beggar. One says: "Christ is risen"; the other answers: "He is truly risen"; and these words are the Russians' greeting during Easter time. A similar custom had, through the influence of the **Byzantine** court, been adopted at **Rome** for a time. The greeting was: *Surrexit Dominus vere*; R. *Et apparuit Simoni*. (Maximilianus, Princ. Sax., Praelect. de liturg. Orient., I, 114; Martene, *De antiq. Eccl. rit.*, c. xxv, 5.) The **Armenian** Church during the entire time from Easter to Pentecost celebrates the **Resurrection** alone to the exclusion of all feasts of the **saints**. On Easter Monday they keep **All Souls' Day**, the Saturday of the same week the Decollation of St. John, the third **Sunday** after Easter the founding of the first **Christian Church** on Sion and of the **Church** in general, the fifth Sunday the Apparition of the Holy Cross at **Jerusalem**, then on Thursday the **Ascension of Christ**, and the Sunday after the feast of the great Vision of St. Gregory. From Easter to **Ascension** the **Armenians** never fast or do they abstain from meat (C. Tondini de Quaranghi, *Calendrier de la Nation Arménienne*). In the Mozarabic Rite of **Spain**, after the **Pater Noster** on Easter Day and during the week the **priest** intones the particula "Regnum" and sings "Vicit Leo de Tribu Juda radix David Alleluja". The people answer: "Qui sedes super Cherubim radix David. Alleluja". This is sung three times (*Missale Mozarab.*). In some cities of **Spain** before sunrise two processions leave the



principal church; one with the image of Mary covered by a black veil; another with the [Blessed Sacrament](#). The processions move on in silence until they meet at a predetermined place; then the veil is removed from the image of Mary and the [clergy](#) with the people sing the "regina Coeli" ([Guéranger](#), Kirchenjahr, VII, 166). For the sanctuary at [Emmaus](#) in the Holy Land the [Holy See](#) has approved a special feast on Easter Monday, "Solemmitas manifestationis D.N.I. Chr. Resurg., Titul. Eccles. dupl. I Cl.", with proper [Mass](#) and [Office](#) (Cal. Rom. Seraph. in Terrae S. Custodia, 1907).

## **Peculiar customs of Easter time**

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### ***Risus Paschalis***

This strange custom originated in [Bavaria](#) in the fifteenth century. The [priest](#) inserted in his sermon funny stories which would cause his hearers to laugh (*Ostermärlein*), e.g. a description of how the [devil](#) tries to keep the doors of [hell](#) locked against the descending Christ. Then the speaker would draw the moral from the story. This Easter laughter, giving rise to grave abuses of the word of [God](#), was prohibited by [Clement X](#) (1670-1676) and in the eighteenth century by Maximilian III and the [bishops](#) of [Bavaria](#) (Wagner, De Risu Paschali, Königsberg, 1705; Linsemeier, Predigt in Deutschland, Munich, 1886).

### ***Easter eggs***

Because the use of eggs was forbidden during [Lent](#), they were brought to the table on Easter Day, coloured red to symbolize the Easter [joy](#). This custom is found not only in the Latin but also in the [Oriental Churches](#). The symbolic meaning of a new creation of [mankind](#) by [Jesus](#) risen from the dead was probably an invention of later times. The custom may have its origin in [paganism](#), for a great many [pagan](#) customs, celebrating the return of spring, gravitated to Easter. The egg is the emblem of the germinating life of early spring. Easter eggs, the children are told, come from [Rome](#) with the bells which on Thursday go to [Rome](#) and return Saturday morning. The sponsors in some countries give Easter eggs to their god-children. Coloured eggs are used by children at Easter in a sort of game which consists in testing the strength of the shells (Kraus, Real-Encyklopädie, s.v. *Ei*). Both coloured and uncoloured eggs are used in some parts of the [United States](#) for this game, known as "egg-picking". Another practice is the "egg-rolling" by children on Easter Monday on the lawn of the White House in Washington.

### ***The Easter rabbit***

The Easter Rabbit lays the eggs, for which reason they are hidden in a nest or in the garden. The rabbit is a [pagan](#) symbol and has always been an emblem of fertility (Simrock, Mythologie, 551).

### ***Handball***

In [France](#) handball playing was one of the Easter amusements, found also in [Germany](#) (Simrock, op. cit., 575). The ball may represent the sun, which is believed to take three leaps in rising on Easter morning. Bishops, [priests](#), and [monks](#), after the strict discipline of [Lent](#), used to play ball during Easter week (Beleth, Expl. Div. off., 120). This was called *libertas Decembrica*, because formerly in December, the masters used to play ball with their servants, maids, and shepherds. The ball game was connected with a dance, in which even [bishops](#) and [abbots](#) took part. At Auxerre, [Besançon](#), etc. the dance was performed in church to the strains of the "Victimae paschali". In [England](#), also, the game of ball was a favourite Easter sport in which the municipal corporation engaged with due parade and dignity. And at [Bury](#) St. Edmunds, within recent years, the game was kept up with great spirit by twelve old [women](#). After the game and the dance a banquet was given, during which a [homily](#) on the feast was read. All these customs disappeared for obvious reasons (Kirchenlex., IV, 1414).

### ***Men and women***

On Easter Monday the [women](#) had a [right](#) to strike their husbands, on Tuesday the men struck their wives, as in December the servants scolded their masters. Husbands and wives did this "ut ostendant sese mutuo debere corrigere, ne illo tempore alter ab altero thori debitum exigat" (Beleth, I, c. cxx; Durandus, I, c. vi, 86). In the northern parts of [England](#) the men parade the streets on Easter

Sunday and claim the privilege of lifting every [woman](#) three times from the ground, receiving in payment a [kiss](#) or a silver sixpence. The same is done by the [women](#) to the men on the next day. In the Neumark (Germany) on Easter Day the men servants whip the maid servants with switches; on Monday the maids whip the men. They secure their release with Easter eggs. These customs are probably of pre-Christian origin (Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Das festliche Jahr*, 118).

### ***The Easter fire***

The Easter Fire is lit on the top of mountains (Easter mountain, *Osterberg*) and must be kindled from new fire, drawn from wood by friction (*nodfyr*); this is a custom of [pagan](#) origin in vogue all over [Europe](#), signifying the victory of spring over winter. The [bishops](#) issued severe edicts against the sacrilegious Easter fires (Conc. Germanicum, a. 742, c.v.; Council of Lestines, a. 743, n. 15), but did not succeed in abolishing them everywhere. The [Church](#) adopted the observance into the Easter ceremonies, referring it to the fiery column in the [desert](#) and to the [Resurrection of Christ](#); the new fire on [Holy Saturday](#) is drawn from flint, symbolizing the [Resurrection](#) of the Light of the World from the [tomb](#) closed by a stone (Missale Rom.). In some places a figure was thrown into the Easter fire, symbolizing winter, but to the [Christians](#) on the Rhine, in Tyrol and [Bohemia](#), [Judas](#) the traitor (Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Das festliche Jahr*, 112 sq.).

### ***Processions and awakenings***

At Puy in [France](#), from time immemorial to the tenth century, it was customary, when at the first psalm of [Matins](#) a canon was absent from the choir, for some of the canons and vicars, taking with them the processional cross and the [holy water](#), to go to the house of the absentee, sing the "Haec Dies", sprinkle him with water, if he was still in bed, and lead him to the church. In punishment he had to give a breakfast to his conductors. A similar custom is found in the fifteenth century at [Nantes](#) and Angers, where it was prohibited by the [diocesan synods](#) in 1431 and 1448. In some parts of [Germany](#) [parents](#) and children try to surprise each other in bed on Easter morning to apply the health-giving switches (Freyde, *Ostern in deutscher Sage, Sitte und Dichtung*, 1893).

### ***Blessing of food***

In both the Oriental and Latin Churches, it is customary to have those victuals which were prohibited during [Lent](#) blessed by the [priests](#) before eating them on Easter Day, especially meat, eggs, butter, and cheese (Ritualbucher, [Paderborn](#), 1904; Maximilianus, *Liturg. or.*, 117). Those who ate before the food was blessed, according to popular [belief](#), were punished by [God](#), sometimes instantaneously ([Migne](#), *Liturgie*, s.v. Pâques).

### ***House blessings***

On the eve of Easter the homes are blessed (Rit. Rom., tit. 8, c. iv) in memory of the passing of the [angel](#) in [Egypt](#) and the signing of the door-posts with the blood of the [paschal lamb](#). The [parish priest](#) visits the houses of his [parish](#); the [papal](#) apartments are also blessed on this day. The room, however, in which the [pope](#) is found by the visiting [cardinal](#) is blessed by the pontiff himself (Moroni, *Dizionario*, s.v. Pasqua).

### ***Sports and celebrations***

The Greeks and Russians after their long, severe [Lent](#) make Easter a day of popular sports. At Constantinople the cemetery of Pera is the noisy rendezvous of the Greeks; there are music, dances, and all the pleasures of an Oriental popular resort; the same custom prevails in the cities of [Russia](#). In [Russia](#) anyone can enter the [belfries](#) on Easter and ring the bells, a privilege of which many [persons](#) avail themselves.

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## Sources

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## About this page

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